



# WASHOE COUNTY

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DA DT  
Risk Mgt. DT  
HR NA  
Other NA

## STAFF REPORT

**BOARD MEETING DATE:** December 9, 2014

**DATE:** November 13, 2014

**TO:** Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Robert Smith, Supervisor, Washoe County Regional Animal Services  
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**THROUGH:** Kevin Schiller, Interim Director of Washoe County Regional Animal Services  
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**SUBJECT:** Presentation and update on the Veterinary Clinical Affiliation Agreement between Truckee Meadows Community College and Washoe County Regional Animal Services for the placement of veterinary technician students at the Regional Animal Services facility, acknowledge presentation and update and possible direction to staff on related matters. (All Commission Districts)

### SUMMARY

Presentation and update on the Veterinary Clinical Affiliation Agreement between Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) and Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS) for the placement of veterinary technician students at the Regional Animal Services facility, acknowledge presentation and update and possible direction to staff on related matters.

**Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item:** Economic development and diversification

### PREVIOUS ACTION

On September 11, 2012 the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners approved the Veterinary Clinical Affiliation Agreement between TMCC and WCRAS for the placement of veterinary technician students at the Regional Animal Services facility.

### BACKGROUND

The TMCC Veterinary Technician Program has had a successful partnership with WCRAS for many years. Students came to the old facility when it was Reno Animal Services in 2005 to assist with care of the animals. Students have consistently been attending labs since the current facility was built in 2006. On September 11, 2012 the Washoe County Board of County

**AGENDA ITEM #** 10

Commissioners approved the Veterinary Clinical Affiliation Agreement between TMCC and WCRAS.

**How the relationship benefits the veterinary technician students from TMCC:**

- The shelter provides a unique opportunity for the education of veterinary technician students in that students see animals that do not receive routine veterinary care.
- Students encounter diseases at the shelter that are not seen routinely in veterinary practice (for example panleukopenia, dermatophytosis, and sarcoptic mange).
- With an average of 30-40 animals coming through intake every day, there are always animals in need of medical or husbandry care. Without the shelter, students would only get hands on experience at local veterinary hospitals where they would not see as many patients.
- The shelter provides a unique opportunity to see multiple species. At any given time the shelter may house mice, rats, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, reptiles, birds, horses, goats, etc. in addition to dogs and cats.
- Shelter medicine has become an important area of veterinary medicine. A number of veterinary schools now have shelter medicine programs (that include training for shelter medicine residents). There is an Association of Shelter Veterinarians with the goal of elevating care to animals in shelter environments ([sheltervet.org](http://sheltervet.org)). This area of medicine is important for the veterinary technician students to learn about and experience.
- By participating at WCRAS, students learn about laws pertaining to animals and see first-hand the functioning of an animal control facility. Once they graduate, they take this information with them to local practices. There is further good will generated between the veterinary community and the animal shelter through the students' positive experience with the facility.
- The WCRAS facility presents a unique opportunity in that the students and instructors help local rescue groups with surgical procedures using the surgery suite. Because the facility does not have to operate a high volume spay/neuter clinic, students learn to provide optimal veterinary care as they would in a private practice. The controlled surgical environment and experience includes multimodal anesthesia, IV fluids, and the use of multi-parameter monitoring equipment.

**How the relationship benefits Washoe County Regional Animal Services:**

- Under the guidance of licensed veterinary technicians and veterinarians from TMCC, the students assist with providing veterinary care to the animals at the shelter. With the assistance of the students and teachers, more animals can receive care than is normally possible from the WCRAS Licensed Veterinary Technician (LVT) and staff at the facility. With eight students and two instructors to each class session, there are many additional trained hands to care for the animals.

- Student participation at the shelter does not cost the County or the tax payers' money. With student fees for hands on classes, the program provides supplies and has equipment that supplements what the County normally provides for the animals.
- The instructors from TMCC are licensed by the Nevada State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners. They bring experience and knowledge to the shelter environment.

### **Information about the program and participation at the shelter:**

The TMCC Veterinary Technician Program is a two year program with the goal of graduating students to go on to become LVTs. Students complete 73 credits for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Veterinary Technology. There are various classes in the first and second year of the curriculum where students work with live animals. The primary classes, where the intent is to have students at the WCRAS facility on a regular basis, include:

VETT 101	Introduction to Animal Health
VETT 128	Animal Nursing
VETT 205	Diagnostic Imaging
VETT 235	Anesthesia, Surgical Nursing and Dental Procedures
VETT 227	Advanced Animal Nursing

Students provide assistance at WCRAS in the areas of husbandry, animal nursing, radiology, surgical nursing, and dentistry. Procedures that are performed by the students include:

- Perform physical examinations on selected animals
- Give vaccinations as necessary
- Clean cages, kennels, and animal housing areas
- Medicate and care for ill animals that have been examined by a veterinarian and prescribed a treatment plan (including bandage changes)
- Groom and bathe animals, including toe nail trims
- Draw blood and run blood work (the program has a full diagnostic lab in the medical suite)
- Collect other samples for testing – for example skin scraping for microscopic examination for parasites
- Perform dental cleanings on selected animals in association with the rescue groups
- Provide surgical nursing assistance for the spay and neuter of animals going to or in rescue
- Run pre-anesthetic blood work on patients as necessary
- Provide a medical record of examination and laboratory testing for the rescue organization

### **History and strengths of the TMCC Veterinary Technician Program:**

The TMCC Veterinary Technician Program was initiated after an assessment of the veterinary community needs in 2002 discovered the demand for licensed veterinary technicians was evident. After the American Veterinary Medical Association – Committee on Veterinary Technician Education and Activities (AVMA-CVTEA) initial visit in September 2005, the program was granted full accreditation on November 12, 2006. The TMCC Veterinary

Technician Program continues to have full AVMA accreditation. The AVMA-CVTEA visits schools on a five year cycle, and the second site visit to TMCC occurred in December 2010.

The functions of the TMCC program are regulated by the AVMA and also by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Even though the program does not have its own animals, the IACUC oversees what the students are doing both on campus and off site with animals. There are policies in place that follow the standards of veterinary care for the various species that the students encounter.

The TMCC Veterinary Technician Program has enrolled students since the fall of 2004 with the first class graduating in the spring of 2005. Graduates of the program have all passed the National Exam for Veterinary Technicians (VTNE). This is a 100% pass rate in the past 7 years. Approximately 89% of vet tech graduates are employed, 79% as technicians either locally or in the State of Nevada, and an additional 10% are employed in an animal related position or as a technician in another state (other than Nevada or the Lake Tahoe area). Six percent are pursuing other educational opportunities.

All of the program graduates who live in the Northern Nevada area have found employment as LVTs. According to federal job projections, the field of veterinary technology is expected to grow by 36% by 2018 (change/growth between 2008 and 2018). Approximately half of the veterinary technician students in the program are already employed by local veterinary facilities (for example, 63% of this past year's graduating class already had jobs). The goal of the partnership between WCRAS and the TMCC Veterinary Technician Program is for these employed graduates to have confidence with the basic skills and have an understanding of and positive opinion towards shelter medicine and animal control.

The Veterinary Technician Program has strong relationships with the veterinary community here in Northern Nevada. The students participate at hospitals and facilities such as the Animal Emergency Center, Sierra Veterinary Specialists, Baring Boulevard Veterinary Hospital, Advanced Pet Care of Northern Nevada, Comstock Large Animal Hospital, Eye Care for Animals, the University of Nevada – Reno, and the Nevada Department of Agriculture. The program also has an Advisory Committee comprised of veterinary technicians and veterinarians from the multiple sectors of veterinary medicine in the area to provide guidance to the program.

The program in conjunction with the WCRAS LVT has established a fully functional medical/surgery suite at the WCRAS facility. With donated equipment, TMCC Veterinary Technician Program equipment, and WCRAS equipment, we are able to meet most of the veterinary needs of the animals. The suite is routinely inspected by the college's IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) as well as included in the County's inspections of the WCRAS facility.

TMCC has a Clinical Affiliation Agreement for use with off campus sites. To clarify, the college does not expect clinical sites to provide any insurance coverage for its students. Students are responsible for having their own medical insurance should something happen to them on or off campus. Students are taught at various points in the veterinary technician curriculum the

dangers inherent in working with animals. Safety is of primary importance to the program and the college, and students are closely monitored by experienced instructors. The Veterinary Technician Program works closely with WCRAS to ensure that safety policies are in place at the shelter facility and OSHA regulations are being met.

### **Summary:**

The goal of the TMCC Veterinary Technician Program is to continue to provide students with a hands-on learning environment. The program believes that the ideal environment for working with animals is at the Washoe County Regional Animal Services facility. More importantly, the students are able to help the animals of the community. The animals benefit by receiving more comprehensive care than is normally possible from just the WCRAS LVT and staff at the facility.

The WCRAS staff benefits as students are able to assist in routine care thus lessening staff's work load. The rescue community benefits as the students participate in labs that lead to preparing the animals to be candidates for adoption. In addition, the program is committed to helping facilitate any outreach programs that the County would like to implement in a manner consistent with the structure of the students' experiences. The graduates of the TMCC program will go into positions in the local veterinary community and continue to promote the efforts and good will of the WCRAS facility.

### **Future Plans:**

The plan for the future is for TMCC Veterinary Technician Program and WCRAS to continue its partnership and strengthen it. This would include adding Directed Clinical Practice back to WCRAS. In the past, second year students with a Veterinary Technician in Training (VTIT) designation from the NV State Board rotated through intake with WCRAS LVT to assist with animal handling, physical examination, and vaccination. One student rotated through the facility every Thursday to be supervised by the WCRAS LVT (an instructor from TMCC did not accompany the student). WCRAS was deleted from the class rotation while under the management of the Sheriff's office as this deviated from policy (a TMCC instructor was to be present). We request direction to allow students five days a week access to our intake facility for future educational opportunities. This would be under the direction of the WCRAS LVT. Additionally this opportunity will increase WCRAS animal care and husbandry practices.

We would also like to offer students who are planning on applying to the TMCC Veterinary Technician Program the opportunity to volunteer at WCRAS. Students applying to the TMCC Veterinary Technician Program must have at least six months of work experience in a veterinary facility or they must volunteer fifty hours at one or multiple facilities to ensure they have an understanding of their chosen field and understand the responsibilities of an LVT. WCRAS could benefit from having additional students who are interested in the field of veterinary medicine assist with tasks at the shelter. Students will also be familiar with the facility when they are admitted to the program and continue their studies.

Additionally we are exploring the possibility of extending the student participation to Washoe County School District (WCSD) high school students. WCSD offers an animal science/veterinary preparation program at the Academy of Arts, Careers and Technology

(AACT) campus on Edison Way in Reno. The district will have an additional program coming on-line in the 2015-2016 school year at North Valleys High School. With offering access to WCSD students, WCRAS will continue to enhance the education of potential veterinary professionals within the Truckee Meadows and beyond.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

No fiscal impact.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners acknowledge the presentation and update on the Veterinary Clinical Affiliation Agreement between Truckee Meadows Community College and Washoe County Regional Animal Services for the placement of veterinary technician students at the Regional Animal Services facility, and possible direction to staff on related matters.”

**POSSIBLE MOTION**

Should the Board agree with staff’s recommendation, a possible motion would be:

“Move to acknowledge the presentation and update on the Veterinary Clinical Affiliation Agreement between Truckee Meadows Community College and Washoe County Regional Animal Services for the placement of veterinary technician students at the Regional Animal Services facility, and possible direction to staff on related matters.”